

Work and Equalities Institute Fifth Annual Lecture

Why do workers leave the labour force? Pandemic-era work transitions in the US and Germany.

Professor Ian Greer
School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University

Date: Thursday 18th May.
Time: 11:00 to 12:30.
Venue: Alliance Manchester Business School Lecture Pod B.
[Register via Eventbrite](#)



Abstract

Once celebrated as a powerful engine of job creation, the US labour market has performed poorly over the past two decades. Unemployment rates have become increasingly volatile, unemployment durations have become longer, and labour force participation has declined. In this talk I examine some of the reasons for this change, drawing on a longitudinal qualitative study of US and German workers who experienced a spell of unemployment during the pandemic. I argue that some of the US's more illiberal institutions create severe barriers to workers attempting to make transitions to work, and that supports such as unemployment insurance fail to compensate.

About the speaker

Ian Greer directs the ILR Ithaca Co-Lab and is a Research Professor. He carries out engaged research and teaching in Ithaca and the surrounding region. Before he moved to Ithaca he worked for nearly 10 years based in England, first as a Research Fellow at Leeds University and then as Professor of Comparative Employment Relations and Director of the Work and Employment Research Unit at the University of Greenwich. He has had visiting positions in Aix-en-Provence, Berlin, Cologne, Chemnitz, Jena, Paris, and Sydney.

Ian uses qualitative comparative methods to examine marketization and its effects in industrial relations and welfare states. His early work explored how German and US trade unions were coping with intensified price-based competition, through international solidarity, collective bargaining, coalitions with civil society, and organizing the unorganized. Over the years he has extended this line of questioning to examine the way that managers and policymakers stage competition across Europe, in multinational automakers, welfare-to-work schemes, social work, health care, ports, and music.

<https://cornell.academia.edu/IanGreer>